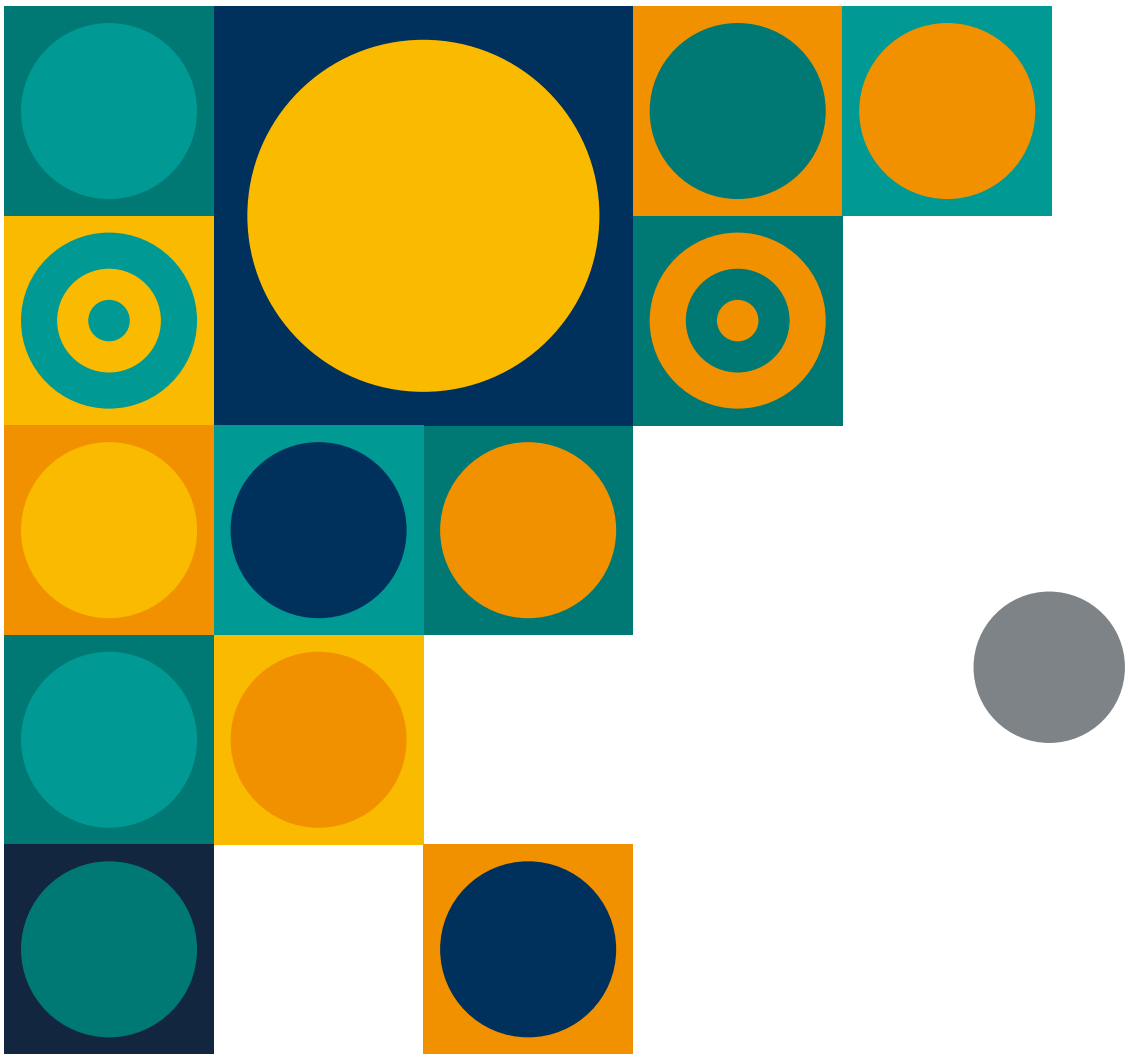

PARENTS

in (Cyber)bullying Prevention

A Practical Guide

PARTICIPATE

Parents and Technology in Cyberbullying:
Intervention and Prevention for Future Experts

Funded by
the European Union

PARTICIPATE

Parents and Technology in Cyberbullying:
Intervention and Prevention for Future Experts

Authors: Eszter Salamon
Adrienne Katz
Luca László
Anastasiia Petrova

Graphic design and layout: Emanuele Bertolani

CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Creative Commons Attribution: Non-commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International
This license requires that re-users give credit to the creator. It allows re-users to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, for non-commercial purposes only.
BY: Credit must be given to you, the creator.
NC: Only non-commercial use of your work is permitted.
SA: If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.
Non-commercial means not primarily intended for or directed towards commercial advantage or monetary compensation.
You are free to share and adapt this material for non-commercial purposes, provided appropriate credit is given, changes are indicated, and any derivative works are distributed under the same license.
A copy of the license is available at:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

This project has received funding from the European Union HORIZON-MSCA-2021 Doctoral Networks Programme under Grant Agreement no. 101073332

Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1.....4

Chapter 2.....9

Chapter 3.....15

Chapter 4.....22

CHAPTER 1

Be in the picture —
the parent who is aware

Bullying can happen anywhere — at school, at home, or online — and it often goes unnoticed. As a parent, staying aware of your child's daily life is key. Small changes in mood, behaviour, friendships, or online habits can be important signals. Regular, open conversations and genuine interest in your child's experiences help you stay "in the picture" and notice when something may be wrong.

Bullying has long-term consequences

for everyone involved:

Children who are bullied may experience anxiety, low self-esteem, and difficulties in learning and relationships.

01

Children who bully others are at risk of developing harmful behavioural patterns. This behaviour can also have a negative impact on their health, work and future relationships.

02

Those who are both bullies and victims are at highest risk for severe mental health problems.

04

Those who witness bullying can feel distress, fear, or guilt.

03

Early awareness and support can prevent these effects from becoming long-lasting.

CHAPTER 1

How to know if something is wrong

To make sure you know if your child is being bullied, pay attention to warning signs such as sudden mood changes

sudden mood changes

avoiding school or devices

sleep problems or anxiety

secrecy about online activities

However, the most important step is to create regular opportunities for your child to talk through everyday conversations, not only when problems arise.

Trust your instincts — if something feels off, gently ask.

Why trust is key

Bullying can happen anywhere — at school, at home, or online — and it often goes unnoticed. As a parent, staying aware of your child's daily life is key. Small changes in mood, behaviour, friendships, or online habits can be important signals. Regular, open conversations and genuine interest in your child's experiences help you stay "in the picture" and notice when something may be wrong.

Listen calmly

Avoid overreacting

Take their concerns seriously

The most effective way to prevent (cyber)bullying is not control, but trust, communication, and active involvement in your child's life, while helping to build resilience.

CHAPTER 1

Is it bullying?

Bullying usually involves

repeated behaviour

intention to hurt

imbalance of power

But even a single serious incident (especially online) can be harmful and should be taken seriously. At the same time, some children will experience certain behaviours as bullying while others will just shrug it off.

It is important to discuss any incident openly, and ask how your child feelds about it.

CHAPTER 2

What to do in different situations

If a child is being bullied

1. **Listen first** – ask what they want to happen

2. **Do not rush** to act immediately unless safety is at risk

3. Encourage them to **seek help** (teacher, another trusted adult)

4. **Keep evidence** (messages, screenshots) for online cases

Helpful

supportive, calm action

Less helpful

Telling them to "just ignore it" (sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't).

Taking away their device as "protection"

Immediately raising hell at school

You may want to involve school staff (teachers or school head), but only if both you and your child trust them, and the school has a clear policy on responding to bullying.

If a child is being bullied by **a peer (another child or group of children)**

Peer bullying is the most common form and often happens in schools or social groups. It may include teasing, exclusion, spreading rumours, or physical aggression.

1. **Listen calmly and take your child seriously**

2. **Help your child think through powerful responses – humour is powerul**

3. **Encourage your child to seek help from a trusted professional at school, a community centre or similar**

4. **Contact the school if the situation continues, but only if it happens at school.**

Focus on support and problem-solving, not blaming your child.

If a child is being bullied by **a teacher**

Bullying by teachers may involve humiliation, unfair treatment, or misuse of authority. This can be especially distressing because of the power imbalance. Teachers are often not aware that their behaviour is bullying and harmful.

1. **Take your child's account seriously – this can be difficult to share**

2. **Gather clear information – and evidence, if possible – about what happened**

3. **Follow school procedures (e.g. speak to another teacher, school leadership)**

4. **Keep communication calm and fact-based**

Ensure your child feels believed and protected.

If a child is being bullied by **a family member**

Bullying within the family (including siblings or extended family) can be hidden and ongoing. It may include verbal, emotional, or even physical harm. Children tend to turn to family members for help.

1. **Don't dismiss it as "just family conflict"**

2. **Set clear boundaries about acceptable behaviour**

3. **Supervise interactions if needed**

4. **Seek external support (e.g. a counsellor) if the situation persists**

Home should be a safe space. Take repeated harm seriously

Online or offline – does it make a difference?

offline (face-to-face)

Offline bullying happens in physical spaces like school, home, neighbourhoods, or activities. It may be easier to observe but can still be hidden.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Identify where and when it happens
1. Work with the school or other adults to improve supervision and safety
1. Help your child build supportive friendships
1. Consider practical safety strategies (e.g., staying with others)

Focus on both immediate safety and long-term support

online (cyberbullying)

Online bullying can happen anytime and spread quickly (messages, posts, images). One single incident is more likely to have a lasting impact if it happens online.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Stay calm and don't blame your child
2. Save evidence (screenshots, messages...)
3. Use platform tools: block, report, adjust privacy settings
4. Contact the school if it involves peers or adults (such as teachers) from school
5. Seek help if the content is harmful or threatening

Act quickly to reduce exposure and protect your child

No matter who the bullying comes from, your child needs to feel safe, believed, and protected.

CHAPTER 2

If your child is bullying others

1. Stay calm and listen without judgement

2. Make it clear the behaviour is not acceptable

3. Work together on better ways to handle emotions

4. Contact the school if needed

Focus on learning and responsibility, not just punishment

Try to avoid escalation

If the situation has escalated, and authorities or school staff have been involved, make your child feel you are there to help.

If your child witnesses bullying

1. Encourage them to support the victim (even small actions help)

2. Teach them to tell a trusted adult

3. Remind them they are not responsible, but they can make a difference

CHAPTER 3

Practical strategies for parents

There is no single "right" response to bullying. What matters most is:

- staying connected to your child
- building trust
- acting calmly and thoughtfully

Together, families, schools, and communities can create safer environments for all children.

What helps most

- Listen and support your child
- Build resilience (confidence, coping skills, rehearse good responses)
- Work with trusted professional when needed
- Use evidence in serious cases

Use your communities

- Listen and support your child
- Build resilience (confidence, coping skills, rehearse good responses)
- Work with trusted professional when needed
- Use evidence in serious cases

Parent groups and chats

- Can be useful for sharing information
- But avoid blaming, gossip, or escalating conflicts

Helplines and support services

- Offer confidential advice
- Helpful when you're unsure what to do

Online safety tools

- Listen and support your child
- Build resilience (confidence, coping skills, rehearse good responses)
- Work with trusted professional when needed
- Use evidence in serious cases

When to take formal action

Use school procedures or formal complaints when:

- bullying is inside the school
- the situation is serious

Contact authorities if:

- other measures did not help or there is no chance for them to help
- there is a risk of serious harm or threat to safety
- there is illegal activityacty

Strategies for parents of bullied children

Strategy	Pros	Cons
Just listen, and ask if they want you to do anything	Builds trust, helps your child feel safe and heard, supports their sense of control	If no action follows in serious cases, the situation may continue or worsen.
Tell them to ignore	Can work for minor, one-off incidents; avoids escalation.	Often ineffective in ongoing bullying; may make the child feel unsupported.
Reach out to teachers	Enables school intervention, creates shared responsibility.	May not help if the school is not trusted by your child or unresponsive; can escalate if handled poorly.
Tell your children to tell teachers	Encourages help-seeking and independence.	Children may not trust teachers, or trust that they will act properly, and they may fear consequences.
Reach out to parents of bullies	Can resolve issues quickly if communication is constructive.	Risk of conflict, denial, or escalation between adults.
Fight back	May give a short-term sense of control or protection.	Often escalates the situation; can lead to harm or disciplinary consequences. Does not teach problem-solving
Build physical resilience	Improves confidence and sense of safety – many self-defence methods also build mental resilience.	Does not address the root cause of bullying; may send the message that the child must "handle it alone."
Build mental resilience	Strengthens coping skills, self-esteem, and long-term wellbeing.	Takes time; should not replace action to stop the bullying.

Strategies for parents of bullied children

Strategy	Pros	Cons
Evidence collection	Important for reporting, especially in cyberbullying cases.	Can be stressful; may prolong exposure if not handled carefully.
Use parent circles (e.g. group chats) well	Useful for sharing information and coordinating support.	Can spread rumours, escalate conflict, or expose children's privacy.
Use your communities	Provides wider support network (family, friends, local groups).	Advice may vary in quality; not all community responses are helpful.
Helplines	Offer confidential advice, guidance, and emotional support.	Do not directly stop the bullying; or require follow-up action, it is hard for them to be specific enough.
Block, report, leave online platforms together with your child (never without them)	Quickly reduces exposure to harm online.	Does not address underlying issues; bullying may continue elsewhere.
Formal complaint and report procedures	Creates accountability; can lead to structured intervention.	Can be slow, stressful, and sometimes escalate tensions.
Turn to authorities or official services	Necessary in serious cases (threats, violence, abuse); ensures protection.	Can be intimidating; may escalate the situation and should be used carefully.

No single strategy works in every situation—combine approaches based on your child's needs and always prioritise safety and trust. Involve your child in the decision-making process, allow them to take the lead in how this is handled.

Strategie for parents of children who bully others

Strategy	Pros	Cons
Just listen, and ask if they want you to do anything	Helps understand the reasons behind the behaviour; keeps communication open.	Must be balanced with clear boundaries—listening alone is not enough.
Approach teachers together with your child	Encourages accountability and openness; enables coordinated response and consistent messages between home and school.	A trustful relationship might be missing that can lead to unintended negative consequences; may not be realistic in all cases.
Reach out to parents of the victims	Can repair harm and support resolution if done respectfully.	Risk of conflict or blame; should be approached carefully and calmly.
Build physical resilience	Can improve self-confidence and reduce the need to assert dominance.	May not directly address harmful behaviour or empathy deficits.
Build mental resilience	Supports emotional regulation, empathy, and better decision-making.	Takes time; needs to be combined with clear guidance on behaviour.
Evidence collection	Helps understand what happened and supports fair responses.	May increase tension if used only to prove guilt rather than understand context.
Use parent circles (e.g. group chats) well	Can support communication and shared solutions.	Risk of public shaming, conflict, or escalation.
Use your communities	Provides additional guidance, support, and role models.	Advice may be inconsistent; some responses may reinforce harmful attitudes.

Strategie for parents of children who bully others

Strategy	Pros	Cons
Helplines	Offer confidential advice and parenting support.	Do not replace direct action at home or school.
Restrict access to platforms	May immediately stop harmful online behaviour.	Does not teach responsible behaviour; children easily find ways around restrictions; might be harming child rights and thus be illegal.
Respond to formal complaints and report procedures	Ensures accountability and structured resolution.	Can feel confrontational; may damage relationships if not handled constructively.
Seek help from authorities or official services	Important in situations you feel you cannot handle, and that are serious or repeated cases; provides professional support.	Can escalate the situation; should be used when other approaches are insufficient.

Focus on helping your child take responsibility, understand ithe mpact, and learn better ways to act—not just on punishment.

Strategie for parents of children who witness bullying

Strategy	Pros	Cons
Just listen, and ask if they want you to do anything	Builds trust; helps children process what they saw and feel supported.	May not lead to action if the situation requires intervention.
Tell them to ignore	May help in very minor situations or when safety is a concern.	Can normalise bullying and discourage helping others.
Reach out to teachers	Enables adult intervention; helps protect the victim.	Children may not trust them, and worry about being seen as “telling” or causing trouble.
Tell your children to tell teachers	Encourages responsible action and help-seeking.	May feel difficult or risky for the child without pre-built trust and direct support.
Reach out to parents of victims and/or bullies	Can support resolution and awareness.	Risk of misunderstanding or conflict; should be done carefully.
Build mental resilience	Helps children cope with distress and make ethical decisions.	Does not directly stop the bullying; needs to be combined with action.
Evidence collection	Useful for reporting and supporting others, especially online.	May place pressure on the child; should not put them at risk.
Use parent circles (e.g. group chats) well	Can help share concerns and coordinate support.	Risk of gossip, blame, or escalating the situation.

Strategie for parents of children who witness bullying

Strategy	Pros	Cons
Use your communities	Encourages collective responsibility and support for positive behaviour.	Community responses may vary and not always be constructive.
Helplines	Provide advice on how to support others safely.	Do not directly resolve the situation.
Formal complaint and report procedures	Ensures the issue is taken seriously and addressed.	Can be overly formal and slow; may feel intimidating.
Turn to authorities or official services	Necessary in serious or dangerous situations.	Should be used carefully; may escalate the situation.

Help your child understand that witnesses can make a difference—even small, safe actions can support someone who is being bullied.

CHAPTER 4

Resources for parents

General resources

1

DRONE Parents Handbook (Digital Compass)
https://library.parenthelp.eu/digital-compass-guide-for-parents/

What it offers:

- Practical, easy-to-use guidance for preventing and responding to (cyber)bullying
- Strong focus on building trust and communication at home
- Conversation starters
- Everyday strategies for parents

A key European resource developed with parents and experts

2

SAILS Guide for Parents (ParentHelp Library)
https://library.parenthelp.eu/sailing-masters-guide-parents/

What it offers:

- A comprehensive European guide for navigating children's digital lives
- Promotes a "risk mitigation" approach (teaching children to cope, not just restricting them)
- Supports parents in balancing online safety, autonomy, and children's rights
- Encourages joint decision-making and trust-building within families

Especially useful for: understanding digital risks and building long-term parenting strategies

3

Child Helpline International
https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/

What it offers:

- Access to helplines across Europe
- Free, confidential support for children and families

Important for urgent advice and emotional support

CHAPTER 4

Peer-to-peer bullying prevention resources:

4

Better Internet for Kids (European Commission)

https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/

What it offers:

- EU-wide platform with guides for parents
- Access to Safer Internet Centres in every country
- Advice on cyberbullying, online safety, and digital wellbeing

Central hub for European and national support

5

Safer Internet Centres (by country)

https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/web/portal/country-information

What it offers:

- National helplines and reporting tools
- Support in local languages
- Guidance for parents and children's wellbeing

Essential for practical, local help

6

EU Kids Online

https://www.eukidsonline.net/

What it offers:

- Research on children's online behaviour and risks
- Insights into help-seeking and digital wellbeing

Helps parents understand children's experiences online

7

UNICEF – Cyberbullying Guide for Parents

https://www.unicef.org/end-violence/how-to-stop-cyberbullying

What it offers:

- Simple explanations and practical advice
- Conversation starters for families

Great for talking with your child

8

Council of Europe – Cyberbullying & Digital Citizenship

https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/bullying

What it offers:

- Rights-based resources on online safety
- Guidance on digital citizenship and responsible behaviour

Useful for understanding children's rights online